

Dr. Marta Pérez, School Board Member

SUBJECT: THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA, RECOGNIZE AND OBSERVE MAY 2021 AS ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER HERITAGE MONTH TO BE CELEBRATED AT ALL MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

COMMITTEE: ACADEMICS, INNOVATION, EVALUATION & TECHNOLOGY

LINK TO STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT: RELEVANT, RIGOROUS, AND INNOVATIVE ACADEMICS

Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month pays tribute to the contributions of (AAPI) made to America. A broad term, (AAPI) encompasses all of the Asian continent and the Pacific islands of Melanesia (New Guinea, New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Fiji, and the Solomon Islands), Micronesia (Marianas, Guam, Wake Island, Palau, Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Nauru and the Federated States of Micronesia) and Polynesia (New Zealand, Hawaiian Islands, Rotuma, Midway Islands, Samoa, American Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, Cook Islands, French Polynesia and Easter Island).

(AAPI) Heritage Month originated in 1978 when Congress passed Public Law 95-419. This law directed the President to issue a proclamation designating the week beginning on May 4, 1979 as Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Week. On March 28, 1979, President Carter issued Presidential Proclamation 4650, which highlighted the significant role Asian and Pacific Islander Americans have played in American society and their contributions to the sciences, arts, industry, government and commerce. In 1992, Congress permanently designated May of each year as Asian and Pacific Islander American Heritage Month. The month of May marks two significant dates for this community; May 7, 1843 marking the date on which the first Japanese immigrants arrived in the United States and May 10, 1869 which marks the completion of the first transcontinental railroad, completed with significant contributions from Chinese immigrants.

(AAPI) Heritage month celebrates their accomplishments and the many ways they have contributed to enriching our nation. Despite a long history of injustice and opportunity limiting laws, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, Immigration Act of 1924, and the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, (AAPI) helped to build, defend and strengthen our nation.

Notably, (AAPI) have made lasting contributions to America's wartime efforts in World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq. Special recognition is given to the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, an outfit of Japanese Americans, who fought valiantly in Europe during World War II. Many of these men put their lives on the line for their country while their families were confined to internment camps back in the United States.

Since the start of the pandemic last spring, Asian Americans have faced racist violence at a much higher rate than in previous years. Hate crimes motivated by anti-Asian sentiment has significantly increased. Stop AAPI Hate, a reporting database created at the beginning of the pandemic as a response to the increase in racial violence, received 2,808 reports of anti-Asian discrimination between March 19 and December 31, 2020. The violence has continued into 2021, and President Joe Biden signed an executive order denouncing anti-Asian discrimination shortly after taking office in January.

M-DCPS has more than 6,000 (AAPI) students. Our department of Social Sciences includes a resource guide for celebrating and recognizing Asian Pacific Heritage Month. The Asian community has suffered unfairly during recent times, it is most appropriate for our school district to recognize this month.

“We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.”

Eli Wiesel

This item has been reviewed and approved by the School Board Attorney’s office as to form and legal sufficiency.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
DR. MARTA PÉREZ:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, recognize and observe May 2021 as Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month to be celebrated at all Miami-Dade County Public Schools.